OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC LITERATURE IN GERMANY, 1789-1849 WITH A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY
PHILLIP MARSHALL MITCHELL
B.A., Cornell University, 1938

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
GERMAN IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
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PREFACE

This dissertation has been prepared under the supervision of Prof. Albert W. Aron. Prof. Aron has tirelessly and kindly concerned himself with the details of the dissertation and has offered innumerable helpful suggestions and corrected many factual errors.

For inspiration and help I am indebted to Prof. Paul Böckmann, Heidelberg, Prof. Albert B. Faust, Ithaca, N. Y., Prof. Halldór Hermannsson, Ithaca, N. Y., and Prof. Carl Roos, Copenhagen. To Prof. Hermannsson I am grateful first for his turning my interest to Scandinavian philology, second for many suggestions which have been incorporated in the present dissertation, and third for his liberality in allowing me freely to use the Fiske Icelandic Collection of which he is curator.

For information regarding Ludwig Tieck I thank the eminent Tieck scholar, Prof. Edwin H. Zeydel of the University of Cincinnati. For assistance with Latin texts I thank Mrs. L. F. Peirce, Ithaca, N. Y.

I have been privileged to use the facilities of the University Library and Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Cornell University Library including the Fiske Icelandic Collection, and the libraries of the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. The staffs of these various libraries have been very patient in procuring for me books and articles in which I was interested. The Interlibrary Loan system has provided me with a large number of books from other libraries in the United States. Minor bibliographical details have been furnished me by the reference librarians of the following institutions: Boston Public Library, University of Chicago, Harvard College Library, Library of Congress, New York University (University Heights), Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary, Northwestern University, Tufts College, Western Reserve University, and Yale University.

PART ONE

Introduction

It is the endeavor of this dissertation to make a contribution to the understanding and historical presentation of German literature, namely to demonstrate an extensive interest in and influence of Old Norse-Icelandic[1] literature in Germany from 1789 to 1849 which has not hitherto been fully recognized by students of literature. The year 1789 marks the appearance of Friedrich David Gräter's *Nordische Blumen,* the years 1848-1849, the beginnings of Richard Wagner's literary production which makes use of O. N. material.

This study has been divided into two parts. The first part, the text, will attempt to evaluate the course of O. N. literature in Germany. The second part, the bibliography, can perform the dual service of enabling the reader more easily to form an opinion of his own and of presenting chronologically the available material for further consideration.

It has often been noticed that there was a "Germanic Renaissance" in Germany as well as in Scandinavia at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. A few aspects of the subject have been investigated, but no study of the breadth and depth of German interest in Scandinavian antiquities has been made.

1. The term "Old Norse" which is a fair equivalent of the Scandinavian "norrön,", i. e. Old West Scandinavian, is often confused with "Old Norwegian." Halldór Hermannsson often uses the term "Old Norse-Icelandic" when referring to "norrön" or as it is called in German "Altnordisch", literature. This precedent has been adopted here. The term Old Norse-Icelandic will henceforth appear abbreviated as "O. N."

CHAPTER I.

THE GROWTH OF LITERARY AND CRITICAL INTEREST IN OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC LITERATURE

A. The Overture, 1789-1799

Friedrich David Gräter was the apostle of O. N. literature and mythology not only in this decade but until his death in 1830. Besides the collection of poems and essays directly inspired by his acquaintance with the first volume of the Arne-Magnæan edition of the *Elder Edda,* the *Nordische Blumen,* he published many translations from the O. N. and critical works having bearing on O. N. in his *Bragur Ein litterarisches Magazin der Deutschen und Nordischen Vorzeit* (eight volumes, 1791-1812). Despite the lack of general recognition which he so much desired, Gräter continued his intellectual labors for over forty years. Although his production in the period 1789-1799 and thirty years beyond the decade is uneven in quantity, he never lost the dream which had first mastered him as a youth of less than twenty: that Scandinavian literature was great and rich, a remnant of a lost great Germanic antiquity which must be made the concern of modern Germans as well as Scandinavians.

One of the few influential writers who appreciated Gräter's ability was Herder. In *Die Horen* for 1796, Herder published the essay "Iduna, oder der Apfel der Verjüngung" in which he conservatively advocated the use of O. N. mythology in German poetry.

Mention of O. N. material is found in Wackenroder and Novalis.

B. The Struggle for Recognition, 1800-1809

The second phase of the history of O. N. literature in Germany 1789-1849 is a double struggle: first, an attempt to secure recognition for O. N. literature, and second, an attempt to demonstrate its historic and poetic value. The question as to the possibility of the successful revival of O. N. material in Germany received at least a temporarily affirmative answer

with the publication of Fouque's *Sigurd, der Schlangentödter,* 1808, and the German translation of Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl,* 1809.

Poets employing O. N. material: Gräter, Karl von Münchhausen, Detlef von Bielfeld, Karl Lappe, Ludwig Uhland, Fouqué, Friedrich Majer, Friedrich Wetzel.

Scholars concerned with O. N.: (Mme. de Staël), Gräter, A. L. Schlözer, J. C. Adelung, Friedrich Rühs, Herder, Wilhelm Grimm.

Scandinavian poets employing O. N. material, translated into German: Oehlenschläger, Johannes Ewald, Jens Baggesen, Christian Pram.

Scandinavian scholars concerned with O. N., translated into German: P. E. Müller, P. F. Suhm, Rasmus Nyerup.

Incidental use of O. N. material: Achim von Arnim, Novalis, A. W. Schlegel, Jean Paul, Joseph Görres, Ludwig Tieck (planned).

C. Recognition, 1810-1819

A survey of the years 1810-1819 shows clearly a tremendous increase in both literary and critical interest in O. N. literature. This decade is however more than a stage in the growth of the popularity of O. N. literature in Germany. It is the high point of such interest. The number of publications which contains O. N. material in this decade far exceeds the number of publications in the decades before or after it.

The literary revival of O. N. literature is dominated by three names: Fouqué, Gräter, and Oehlenschläger. German critical interest increased in breadth and depth. There are distinguishable several spheres of special interest: that of Gräter, of the Grimm brothers, of Friedrich Schlegel and Görres, and of students of the *Nibelungenlied,* besides general critical interest represented by the translations into German of contemporary Scandinavian scholars, and finally independent German works having bearing on O. N.

Poets employing O. N.: Gräter, Fouqué, Oehlenschläger, Friedrich Majer, Ernst Schulze.

Scholars: Gräter (editor of *Idunna und Hermode,* 1812-1816), Grimm brothers (aided by R. C. Rask), F. H. von der Hagen, Görres, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Rühs, the Dane P. F. Stuhr.

Scandinavian scholars translated: P. E. Müller, Rasmus Nyerup, Jens Möller.

Incidental use of O. N.: E. M. Arndt, Kotzebue, Friedrich Rückert (planned), *et al.*

D. New Criticism, 1820-1829

In the third decade of the century the number of literary works containing O. N. material was small although the number of authors concerning themselves with O. N. was not too greatly out of proportion with that of the preceding decade. The number of critical works is very large. The literary revival of O. N. material is distinguished by intense interest in Tegnér's *Frithjofs Saga.*

Poets employing O. N.: Tegnér (in several translations), Oehlenschläger, Fouqué, Adelbert von Chamisso, E. M. Arndt.

Scholars: Grimm brothers, C. F. Dahlmann, Friedrich Münter, F. J. Mone, Gräter, C. A. Vulpius, J. L. Heiberg, J. L. Studach.

Scandinavian scholars translated: E. G. Geijer, Constant Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Jens Moller, Torkel Baden.

Incidental use of O. N.: Grillparzer, Gustav Schwab.

E. Toward Richard Wagner, 1830-1849

Although there is perceptible a rather broad acquaintance with O. N. material among German poets, it is not until almost the middle of the century that a new powerful poetic interest in O. N. literature re-appeared in the figures of Moritz Graf Strachwitz and Richard Wagner. The large number of critical publications on the other hand evidences waxing originality of scholarship and thought.

Literary revival of O. N. material: Oehlenschläger, Tegnér (new translations of *Frithjofs Saga*), Karl Simrock, G. C. T. Francke, Amalie Schoppe, von Strachwitz, Wagner.

Scholars: Heinrich Leo, C. F. Koeppen, F. E. C. Dietrich, Grimm brothers, Ludwig Ettmüller, Gottlieb Mohnike, Ferdinand Wachter, Ludwig Uhland, Karl Weinhold.

Scandinavian scholars translated: R. C. Rask, P. E. Müller, E. G. Geijer, A. M. Strinnholm, C. C. Rafn, Carsten Hauch.

CHAPTER II.

GERMAN THEORIES REGARDING O. N. MYTHOLOGY

There are two principal explanations of O. N. mythology during the period 1789-1849, the nature-symbolical and the historical. Nature-symbolism is the doctrine that mythological beliefs are representations of phenomena in nature or of physical processes. The historical explanation is the doctrine that the gods and events of mythology are deified heroes or magnified historical occurrences. In the second quarter of the century allegorical and spiritual-symbolical explanations increased in popularity.

Advocates of nature-symbolical explanation: P. F. Stuhr, E. v. Trautvetter, F. J. Mone, J. L. Heiberg, Ludwig Ettmüller, C. E. Hachmeister, Ludwig Uhland, G. T. Legis, and to a certain extent Gräter and Görres.

Advocates of historical explanation: Wilhelm Grimm, Fouqué, F. Schlegel, Heinrich Leo, and to a certain extent Gräter and Görres.

Advocates of complex or allegorical-symbolical explanations: C. Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Wilhelm Grimm, Georg Lange, K. F. Wiborg, C. F. Koeppen.

One factor which decidedly influenced German concepts of O. N. mythology was the German scholars' own Christianity. For most authors, a resemblance between Christianity and O. N. mythology was felt to exist in the postulated supreme god, "Allvater."

CHAPTER III.

THE SUCCESSFUL REVIVAL OF O. N. MATERIAL

Taking as examples three of the most popular revivals of

O. N. material, Fouqué's *Sigurd, der Schlangentödter*, Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl*, and Tegnér's *Frithiofs Saga*, there evolve by comparison the following prerequisites to the ideal revival from O. N. literature. First, the author must choose worthy material for treatment. Second, he must be acquainted with the original or a dependable translation of the source. Third, he must so assimilate his source that he is not forced constantly to feel bound to it and thereby bring unevenness into his work. Fourth, he must try to understand his source from a historical standpoint and to gain a historical-cultural background free from anachronisms and an admixture of foreign elements. Fifth, he must be able to recast the material into a new form and be able to re-create his sources in such a way that he gives the impression of an original inspired poetical work, so that his own poetic genius may find expression. Nevertheless, as Herder said in his essay "Zutritt der nordischen Mythologie zur neueren Dichtkunst" in 1803: "So kommt es nur darauf an, wem die nordische Iduna ihren Apfel schenke."

CHAPTER IV.

GERMAN EVALUATION OF O. N. LITERATURE

What was the cause of this exceptionally great interest in a foreign literature? This question may be answered by posing two subordinate questions. First: What was felt to be the relationship between Germany and O. N. literature? Second: What did Germans see of particular value in O. N. literature?

The answer to the first question resolves itself rather simply from an examination of the writings and utterances of enthusiastic students of O. N. literature and mythology in Germany. In O. N. literature they saw to an increasing extent in the course of years a literature which could be looked upon as closely related with the presumably lost literature of German antiquity and which might be called the common property of the Germanic peoples. Similarly they felt that O. N. mythology was a substitute for the German mythology which they knew to have existed. While some poets mourned the lack of an old German mythology, others endeavored to find one. This

is the beginning of the assimilation of O. N. mythology. Already in 1803, Herder believed that "Die nordische Mythologie unsrer Sprache näher oder gar einheimisch ist, da die Helden, von denen sie redet Brüder unsrer Vorfahren waren . . . " This hypothesis, which continues still to exert influence today, was more fully developed by Wilhelm Grimm. He wrote in 1808: "Was in Deutschland verloren wurde, das hat sich in dem mehr concentrirten Norden durch eine frühere darauf gelenkte Aufmerksamkeit erhalten. So vermögen wir, gleichsam im Wiederschein darin zu erkennen, was wir sonst besassen . . ." German patriotism greatly furthered this hypothesis, for it was highly desirous of possessing a tradition which could inspire the present and grant hope and inspiration to a Germany oppressed by the Napoleonic wars. By about 1815 the belief in a very close relationship or even an equation of O. N. and the presumably lost Old German literature was widespread. Scandinavian scholars generally opposed the "common property" ("gemeingermanisch") theory.

The question as to what Germans saw of particular value in O. N. literature can be partially answered by pointing to the belief in relationship between the German and Scandinavian past and to the theory that O. N. literature was to some extent at least German property. More important was the German belief that in the North was to be found an unspoiled people and heroes who knew no fear of death. Regnar Lothbrok was above all the heroic representative of the North. Tegnér's Frithjof was likewise an ideal hero who could represent the past and at the same time harmonize with the somewhat sentimental dream of a modern reader. The Regnar Lothbrok tradition is met with again and again as the most characteristic element of what Carl Roos calls the German "dream of the North" ("Drømmen om Norden")

It is curious and significant to note that *Krákumál*, *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and *Friðþjofs saga frækna* are epigonic and "romantic." That is to say, a large part of German interest in O. N. literature was interest not in the older and more naïve literature which actually had sprung from a culture differing decidedly from the modern Christian culture of

Europe, but rather in the later mediæval Icelandic literature which in itself was an attempted revival of traditions from a more glorious past.

A comparison of the relationship between the number of literary revivals of O. N. material and the number of critical works in the field of O. N. philology has shown that literary interest declined rapidly at the same time that scholarship as regards O. N. improved. One is inclined to say after examining the later scholarly works, that they failed to realize the "Wunschbild," the "dream of the North" as it had inspired poets in the previous decades, and therefore destroyed some of the attraction of O. N. literature. Although the German picture of the North had to be revised, the North still exerted a strong attraction. Graf von Strachwitz spoke glowingly of the "Nordlandssage" in his *Neue Gedichte*, 1848. When Richard Wagner wanted to create a work of art embodying the greatest German traditions and a work which would express the German spirit, he chose for his source the Nibelungen legend. Nevertheless, it was to the Scandinavian traditions that he looked for enrichment of the story and of the figure of his ideal hero, Siegfried.

PART TWO

Introductory Note

The present bibliography is an attempt to present as completely as possible all the material which the subject in hand might include. The bibliography is chronological, but alphabetical within the individual years. Works purely runological and archeological in nature have been excluded. Reviews have been listed only when they seemed either of importance to the understanding of an independent work or of particular importance in themselves. Books and articles which were not available to the compiler have been noted as "Not available." On pp. 230-232 is an "Index of Authors and Translators Mentioned in the Critical Bibliography."

OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC LITERATURE IN GERMANY, 1789-1849. A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

[There follows an annotated bibliography of 465 entries plus a supplement of seven entries, which cover in all 107 pages. Contained in the biblography are German translations from the O. N., critical works having bearing on O. N. literature and mythology, literary works published in German employing O. N. motifs, and both literary and critical works drawing incidentally upon O. N. material.]

VITA

I, Phillip Marshall Mitchell, was born on September 23, 1916, in Syracuse, New York, as the son of Dr. O. W. H. Mitchell and his wife, born Preston Settle. After attending public schools in Syracuse, I entered the Cornell University in September, 1934. My junior year was spent at the University of Munich under the auspices and assisted by a scholarship of the "Junior Year in Munich." Having completed major work in German and Scandinavian at Cornell University, I was granted the B. A. degree in June, 1938.

The academic year 1938-1939 I spent at the University of Heidelberg, aided by a university scholarship. There I devoted myself to German literature. The academic year 1939-1940 I spent at the University of Copenhagen, studying chiefly Scandinavian languages and literatures. During the two academic years 1940-1941 I have been Fellow in German at the University of Illinois. During the past year I have been teaching one class in elementary German.

I have studied principally under the following:
at Cornell University: Prof. Albert B. Faust, Prof. Halldór Hermannsson, and Prof. Paul R. Pope;
at the University of Munich: Prof. H. H. Borcherdt, Prof. Eduard Hartl, and Prof. Walter Rehm;
at the University of Heidelberg: Prof. Paul Böckmann, Prof. Hermann Güntert, Prof. Richard Kienast, Dr. Richard von Kienle, and Dr. Otto Mann;
at the University of Copenhagen: Dr. Sigfús Blöndal, Prof. Jón Helgason, Dr. Valfrid Palmgren Munch-Petersen, Prof. Carl Roos, and Prof. Ejnar Thomsen;
at the University of Illinois: Prof. Albert W. Aron, Prof. Henning Larsen, Prof. Herbert Penzl, and Prof. C. A. Williams.